

JUNE 29, 1972

Two months ago, I mentioned in this space that my sister and brother-in-law were planning on leaving New York to go to ranching. When people get the urge to quit good jobs to go to herding, you really shouldn't blab the matter around. News of that sort can cause serious complications, not to mention the amount of calls that'll come in from realtors.

Anyhow, I halfheartedly joined in on the search for a ranch. As you know, people are so land hungry that a backyard can be cut into two ranchettes. Town citizens are knocking each other down to bid on places that wouldn't run a team of Welch ponies. I've been expecting any day to hear that roadside cafes are pasturing cattle in the johnson grass behind their kitchen windows.

In spite of this kind of talk, my kinsmen's enthusiasm increased. On cool mornings their ranching fever was 100 plus. Their long distance telephone calls alone would have paid a down payment on an outfit in other times.

I wasn't too concerned over them getting into trouble until my birthday came. For presents, they sent me two stuffed birds and an eight-foot toboggan. You don't have to be told, I'm sure, how useless a toboggan is in the Shortgrass Country and I don't even have a wild guess what stuffed birds are used for in any country.

Total annual snowfall for this area wouldn't fill a two gallon ice cream freezer. You do see hombres with rubber monkeys hanging on the rearview mirrors, but not in the number that'd make you think a secondary market could be created for stuffed birds. As far as I know, the rubber monkey business may be a thriving one, yet that doesn't mean that rubber monkey customers are going to suddenly switch to stuffed birds. I'd think that anyone who wanted a monk to hang on his mirror would be hard to change in a short time.

The old boy at the express office made matters more embarrassing. He acted more like a postal inspector than a shipping clerk. I really believe he would have come home with me if I hadn't answered his questions. It looks like the express company would teach their employees better manners. The company had a big sign on the wall proclaiming that they shipped exotic animals.

So it seems like that one of the requirements for being a big game shipper would be to leave folks to suffer in silence over their toboggan problems. I bet a zookeeper wouldn't stand around for the whole office force to gape while he loaded up a sled. I'm glad the stuffed birds came by parcel post or I'd still be down there trying to get away from the docks. Angelo shippers ought to visit other movers that handle something besides air-conditioners and worm medicine, then maybe a sled wouldn't be such a surprise.

Easterners get mauled so badly by the human and automobile traffic that they aren't responsible. Southerners and other land bound folks don't understand the pains of living in a city that is polluted by noise and overcrowding from the foundations to the tops of the skyscrapers.

I'm probably overdrawing the matter. As unreliable as the climate is down here, a snow sled might come in handy next winter. However, I've got a bad feeling about those two dead birds. Dead birds just never have sold well in these parts.